

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 /068 W

-----096190 180743Z /13

R 180430Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8334

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENTIANE 1063

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4

TAGS: MOPS PINS PDEV PBOR CB VM LA

SUBJECT: REPORT OF 1975 CAMBODIAN BORDER CLASH WITH WITH SRV
AND MILITARY ORGANIZATION IN MONDOLKIRI REGION

SUMMARY: A CAMBODIAN MAN RECENTLY RELEASED FROM AN
ATTOPEU RE-EDUCATION CAMP TOLD EMBOFF OF A MAJOR
BORDER BATTLE BETWEEN KHMER ROUGE AND VIETNAMESE TROOPS
IN LATE 1975, AND DESCRIBED THE LEADERSHIP ORGANIZATION
AND TROOP STRENGTH OF THE COMMUNIST MILITARY FORCE IN
THE MONDOLKIRI REGION AS OF EARLY 1976. HIS ACCOUNTS
WERE BASED ON REPORTS FROM TWO KHMER ROUGE OFFICERS
WHOM SOURCE LIVED WITH FOR ONE YEAR IN AN LPDR "RE-
EDUCATION" CAMP.

1. TWO KHMER ROUGE OFFICERS, YON AND VANNA, WHO WERE
BATTALION COMMANDERS IN THE MONDOLKIRI REGION UNTIL
EARLY 1976, TOLD SOURCE ABOUT A MAJOR BATTLE WITH
VIETNAMESE TROOPS IN LATE 1975 ALONG THE SRV/CAMBODIAN
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BORDER NEAR SNUOL. REPORTEDLY CONFIDENT OF ITS STRONG
FORCES, THE SRV FORCE CHALLENGED THE CAMBODIANS FOR
CONTROL OF CERTAIN DISPUTED BORDER TERRITORIES.
ACCORDING TO YON AND VANNA, JUST PRIOR TO THE BATTLE
THE VIETNAMESE LAUNCHED A PSYCHOLIGICAL WARFARE CAM-
PAIGN AIMED AT SHAKING THE FIGHTING RESOLVE OF THE
CAMBODIAN TROOPS. THE VIETNAMESE PROPAGANDA REPORTEDLY

EXPLOITED THE FACT THAT THE CAMBODIAN SOLDIERS WERE LOYAL TO NORODOM SIHANOUK AND THAT THEY WERE BEING ASKED TO DEFEND AND UNPOPULAR COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT. BY APPEALING TO THE TROOPS' ANTI-VIETNAMESE AND NATIONALIST SPIRIT, HOWEVER, YON AND VANNA SAID THAT THEIR COMMANDING OFFICER, GENERAL CHHUM, WAS ABLE TO RALLY HIS TROOPS TO BATTLE FIERCELY AGAINST THE SRV ARMY. ALTHOUGH BOTH FORCES WERE EVENLY MATCHED IN MANPOWER WITH FROM 7,000 TO 10,000 TROOPS EACH, THE VIETNAMESE WERE FORCED TO RETREAT WITH HEAVY LOSSES. THE CAMBODIANS REPORTEDLY CAPTURED FIFTY VIETNAMESE PRISONERS.

2. YON AND VANNA TOLD SOURCE THAT THE COMMANDING GENERAL OF THE MONDOLKIRI REGION WAS 26 YEAR OLD GENERAL CHHUN. CHHUN, LITERATE IN CAMBODIAN AND FRENCH, WAS RAISED IN A MIDDLE CLASS RURAL FAMILY. IN 1968 HE WAS CONSCRIPTED INTO THE COMMUNIST ARMY. BY THE TIME SIHANOUK'S GOVERNMENT FELL IN 1970, CHHUN WAS REPORTEDLY THE HEAD OF ONE COMPANY OF 120 SOLDIERS. AS OF EARLY 1976 CHHUN REPORTEDLY "DIRECTLY COMMANDED" ONE BRIGADE OF 1400 MEN. FIFTEEN BATTALIONS, EACH CONSISTING OF ABOUT 800 MEN, WERE SUBORDINATE TO THIS BRIGADE COMMAND. (COMMENT: SOURCE MENTIONED NO REGIMENTAL COMMAND LEVEL WHEN DESCRIBING THE MILITARY ORGANIZATION IN MONDOLKIRI. END COMMENT) ALL FIFTEEN OF THE BATTALION COMMANDERS
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(INCLUDING YON AND VANNA) WERE BETWEEN 20 AND 26 YEARS OF AGE AND, FOR THE MOST PART, WERE FROM MIDDLE CLASS RURAL FAMILIES.

3. GENERAL CHHUN WAS REPORTEDLY A "NATIONALIST" WHO NOMINALLY SUPPORTED THE COMMUNISTS BECAUSE HE BELIEVED THERE WAS NO POLITICAL ALTERNATIVE. ACCORDING TO YON AND VANNA, AT THE END OF 1974 CHHUN DECIDED TO RALLY HIS FORCES TO SUPPORT LON NOL AGAINST THE COMMUNISTS BUT CHANGED HIS MIND WHEN LON NOL'S GOVERNMENT BEGAN TO COLLAPSE. INSTEAD, CHHUN DECIDED TO CURRY FAVOR WITH THE NEW GOVERNMENT UNTIL HE COULD CHOOSE A BETTER TIME TO LAUNCH A REVOLT. IN MARCH 1976 HE SENT HIS TWO MOST TRUSTED FRIENDS, YON AND VANNA, TO LAOS ON A MISSION TO SEARCH FOR EXTERNAL AID AND AMMUNITION. THESE TWO OFFICERS WERE ARRESTED BY THE LPDR AND SENT TO AN ATTOPEU RE-EDUCATION CAMP WHERE THEY MET SOURCE.

4. BEFORE COMING TO LAOS YON WAS THE COMMANDER OF BATTALION "NO. 703" RESPONSIBLE FOR KEEPING ORDER AND SECURITY IN NEWLY CONQUERED ZONES AND IN REGIONS OF LONG TERM COMMUNIST CONTROL. YON REPORTEDLY LIKENED

HIS DUTIES TO THAT OF THE "GERMAN GETAAPO". YON IS 21 YEARS OLD, ANIMATED, DILIGENT, AND THE SON OF A LANDED BOURGEOIS FAMILY OF STUNG TRENG DISTRICT. HIS WIFE IS THE PRESIDENT OF THE VILLAGE'S COMUNIST WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION,

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5. VANNA WAS REPORTEDLY THE COMMANDER OF A BATTALION OF COMBAT SOLDIERS. HE IS 26 YEARS OLD, PERSEVERING, A BLACKSMITH BY TRADE, AND THE SON OF A WEALTHY LANDED BOURGEOIS FARMER. WHEN HE LEFT CAMBODIA FOR LAOS, HIS WIFE WAS A MEMBER OF THE LOCAL "AKI" OR INTELLIGENCE ARM OF THE CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT.

6. YON AND VANNA WERE RELEASED FROM THE LPDR RE-EDUCATION CAMP MARCH 1977 AFTER ONE YEAR OF DETENTION. THEY REPORTEDLY REMAINED IN THE ATTOPEU REGION.
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